

Mokuaikaua Congregational Church
Alli Drive
Kailua-Kona
Hawaii County
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-50

HABS
HI,
1-KAIKO,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MOKUAIKAUA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

HABS No. HI-50

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HI,
1-KAIKO,
2-

Location: Alii Drive, Kailua-Kona, Island of Hawaii, State of Hawaii.

Owner: Hawaiian Evangelical Society (United Church of Christ).

Occupant: Mokuaikaua Church Congregation.

Use: Church.

PART I. HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The American Protestant missionaries who were sent to Hawaii by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions first landed here in Kailua-Kona, Island of Hawaii, in April 1820. The Rev. Asa Thurston and his wife were assigned to establish the mission in Kailua, then the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and remained here until October 1820. From October 1820 to October 1823, Kailua was without a mission station, but the Thurstons returned at this time and organized the first Mokuaikaua Church.

During the absence of the Thurstons, the Governor of the island of Hawaii, Kuakini, had begun the construction of a house for public worship on the site of the present church. This was completed in December 1823. By 1826, the congregation had outgrown the church and the second Mokuaikaua Church was constructed. It was built of posts brought down from the mountains by the natives, had a three-foot wall of stone enclosing the posts, thatched sides, and a thatched roof. In 1835, this second church was burned down by an arsonist, and the present church was begun.

The cornerstone was laid on January 1, 1836 and--as for the previous two constructions--Governor Kuakini offered his support and financial assistance to make the building possible. The native church members donated their labor. They brought the ohia timbers down from the mountains directly behind Kailua, hewed them by hand, and joined them together with ohia pins. The ten spanning beams are over 50 feet long, and required a great deal of labor to find, cut, and transport to the site. The church members also had to obtain the coral from the sea, and burn it for lime. Many of the stones used in the construction were reportedly from an ancient heiau which formerly stood near this site.

On February 4, 1837, the new church was dedicated. Mrs. Thurston has given the following description of the church at the dedication:

"The church was dedicated this afternoon. It was furnished with a steeple and vane, galleries and a pulpit. Most of the people sit on settees and chairs of their own construction which looked very well. The governor himself has borne the whole expense of the carpenters' and mason's work. The people assisted by collecting stones, coral and timber. The governor himself spent some time in the woods superintending the workmen while procuring timber."

Major repairs were made to the church in 1865 and again in 1937. At the time of this second repair, an effort was made to restore the building to its original condition as nearly as possible. Among other things, a non-original false ceiling was removed so that the original construction could once again be seen. It was necessary at this time to install one new beam near the rear of the church, and it was possibly to obtain one nearly 50 feet long to match the original beams. It was probably at this time that the present pews of koa were made.

In 1910, a memorial arch was erected at the entrance to the church grounds to commemorate the arrival of the first missionaries.

REFERENCE

Summarized from: The Story of Mokuaukua Church, compiled by Rev. Paul E. Toms. Hilo, 1965?

Prepared by: Agnes C. Conrad, Hawaii State Archives, August 1967.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is a rectangle measuring approximately 120 feet in length and 50 feet in width.
2. Foundations: Unknown.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Black lava rubble rock set in a bed of coral mortar as thick as the rock, except at the four corners where large dressed stones form a quoin-like frame to each elevation.
4. Structural system, framing: The 3' - 4" thick bearing walls and intermediate 8" x 8" wood posts approximately 10' on center support the heavy timber framing of the roof, as well as the galleries. The spandrel beams of the galleries are approximately 8-1/2" x 9-1/2", framed into the supporting posts with large round-doweled mortise and tenon joints. The chamfered posts are spliced with similar joints at the gallery floor level to continue up to the roof framing. The roof framing consists of what appears to be similar-sized beams spanning from wall to post with doweled, mortise and tenon joints. Inset toward the nave and off the axis of the posts are shorter king posts which support the heavy longitudinal roof beams and a transverse heavy beam. Both of these beams are braced by diagonal members to the posts with the typical doweled joints. The two longitudinal beams support heavy square roof rafters which are approximately 3' on center. There is no center ridge beam.

On the north wall, an additional pair of columns and braced beams forms the lower framing for the tower.

5. Porches, stoops: The main entrances to the church are the two doorways on the west wall, at which wide concrete steps with curving rock enclosing walls occur. Plain concrete stoops occur at the other doorways.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: A restrained attempt at decoration occurs at the doorways, which are framed by a projecting flat band of plaster 13-1/2" wide. The band continues into a full circle arch at the head, enclosing a smooth plastered tympanum. A crudely formed plaster scroll is applied to the rough stone walls at the spring of the arch at most of the doorways. There are traces of this motif at others. The double koa wood doors on the north and west are 1-5/8" thick, vee-jointed, 2' wide, and are obviously new. Older doors on the south and east wall are 2-panel. All doors are trimmed with flat unmolded stock set into the reveal.
 - b. Windows and shutters: On the first floor, the rectangular window openings are trimmed with a projecting flat plaster band 11" wide, the inner edge being rounded into the jamb. The head of the window is treated with a crude plaster triangular pediment. The openings are approximately 4' wide and 7' - 6" high. On the interior, the openings at the splayed jambs measures 5' - 4". There are two pivoted windows in each opening, each sash measuring 3' - 9". There are four lights in each window, 1' - 8" x 1' - 8".

At the gallery level, there are glass jalousies in wood frames set flush with the wall. On the south wall, there is a single stained glass window at the center on the first floor and a small jalousied window high above it in the gable.
8. Roof, shape, covering, eaves: The gabled roof is covered with modern asbestos shingles. At the eaves there is a single flat eave-board and metal gutter with no decorative cornice member.
9. Tower: The two-stage tower and spire is centered on the north wall, set back to the inner surface of this wall. The first stage is square in plan, terminating in a projecting molded eave. It is approximately 22' high and finished in horizontal siding, painted white. The second stage is an irregular hexagon formed by chamfering the corners of a square, smaller than the

one below. It appears to be approximately 20' high and is also finished in horizontal siding. On the four compass-point faces, which are the widest, vertically-proportioned openings with arched heads contain wooden louvers. The tall hexagonal spire is roofed with thick butt cedar shakes.

B. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. First Floor: The first floor measures approximately 42' x 113' - 6". It is entered by two symmetrically disposed doorways on the west and south (rear) walls, a single doorway on the center of the east wall, and one door off-center on the north wall.

There is a gallery over the north end and down the east and west walls. There are 9 posts, 10' on center, supporting each gallery. Access is by wooden stairs at each of the four corners of the building.

At the south end are two wood platforms, the rear one being at a higher level.

2. Stairways: Each of the four corner stairways consists of two reverse flights. There are 18 treads 12" wide and 20 risers 7-1/2" high, and the landing. The stair railing is enclosed by 9" panels and 2-3/4" battens, which are repeated on the gallery railing.
3. Flooring: 2' x 2' concrete tile.
4. Doorways and doors: There are two single-panel doors under the landings on the south end. Opposite them, behind the lectern, are low 3-panel doors. Door trim is flat and unmolded.
5. Decorative features and trim: None.
6. Notable hardware: None.
7. Lighting: Modern electric drop fixtures.
8. Heating: None.

C. Site:

1. Orientation: The church is oriented on a north-south axis with the entrances facing Alii Drive on the east. Directly across the street is Hulihee Palace. Directly north and south are tourist shops and hotels. East of the church on the same property is a one-story classroom building.
2. Landscaping, enclosures: The church property is enclosed on the north, west, and south by a low lava rock dry-joint wall. There are three openings in this wall. That on the north leads to an

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asphalt parking lot near the graveyard in the northwest corner. The middle opening is a wide and high-arched gate, also in lava rock. A white iron picket fence and pedestrian gate are within the arch. The gate is not on axis with the church doors. The southernmost opening has a wooden gate and an asphalt drive leading behind the church.

Informal planting consists of the usual tropical plants, including Coconut Palms, Plumeria, Ti, Hibiscus and Geraniums.

Prepared by: Woodrow W. Wilkins
Supervisory Architect
HABS Hawaii II Project
August 1967